

The Intelligencer.

Office: Nos. 25 and 27 Fourteenth Street.

The Gas Denouncement.

The public were not prepared thus early in the gas investigation for the episode that occurred yesterday morning in the shape of the arrest of John Maxwell and Andrew King—the one the Clerk in the gas office, and the other the inspector of gas meters and collector of bills. The investigating committee after laboring all through Saturday night, became satisfied that the developments warranted the arrest of these two parties on the charge of fraud and embezzlement, and warrants were accordingly sworn out, charging them with these high crimes, and served on them before daylight Sunday morning.

Inasmuch as there is an injunction of secrecy resting upon the members of the investigating committee, the details of the disclosures brought to light can not be made public, but enough of a general character has come out to warrant us in saying that the committee had such positive evidence of the guilt of these two men as to make their prompt arrest an imperative necessity.

It was found that the books had been tampered with; that balances had been altered; that irregularities were all on one side, and that side not in favor of the city, but in the interest of the accused parties.

As uniform were these errors that the committee had no alternative but to determine, in the interest of the public, to hold the men who had kept the books for trial. Therefore they were arrested.

It is not necessary or proper under the circumstances for us to express any opinion in regard to the arrest. The public know the committee, and they will be satisfied that the members have not dealt rashly or wantonly in the premises, but have acted under a conviction forced upon them as the result of a pains taking investigation.

Whether they have erred or not the future will show, as the examination of the arrested parties is set for the 19th, by which time such progress will have been made in the investigation as will be sufficient to disclose the exact nature of the errors beyond all peradventure.

One thing has been made very plain, by the investigation, and that is that in the future there should be a different method of conducting the gas business of the city. Here are the books of the office showing false balances on page after page, for we know not how many years back, and they have run on until accidentally discovered, the city losing money all the time. But for the attempt to destroy them the same losing game might have continued indefinitely. It is fortunate for the city that the attempt was made. It will lead, we trust, to an important change in the supervision of the books hereafter.

In public accounts no laxity in the matter of supervision can be afforded. It is an unfortunate fact, confirmed by every day's developments, that laxity begets temptation, and temptation begets crime.

The Convict Labor Question.

We print in another column a communication from a prison contractor, who presents a side of the convict labor question that has not been heard to any great extent in the public prints. What he says is not without force. It has enough in it to be worthy of at least passing consideration.

There is no question before the public that convicts are feeling when it is discussed that is involved in the query, "What shall be done with the convicts?" As a rule, the answer is, stop their competition with working men. But just how to stop that competition is the question that has not, as yet, been satisfactorily answered.

Should we stop employing convicts within the prison walls, and keep them wholly idle? Shall we hire them out to contractors on public works, as Virginia is doing along the line of the James River? Will that do away with the evils resulting from their competitive labor?

In our opinion it would be better to hire out these men to contractors on public works for the mere subsistence of them, than to let them remain idle in prison, unless we are ready to say that every man who is sent to the penitentiary shall emerge with broken health, for most certainly there will be a decided increase in the sickness and mortality among prisoners who are doomed to solitary confinement. Perhaps the health of a convict is not a matter that should be weighed in discussing the labor question, but if it has any proper place at all in the argument, we must look at the result of solitary confinement for a term of years on the constitution of the average prisoner.

There are many cases a ten years' sentence would virtually amount to a sentence to death, and in a great number of instances five years would do the work effectively. Therefore if we conclude to do away with convict labor, and resort to solitary confinement, we should perhaps so modify the term of imprisonment as to shorten the sentence of convicts.

A preferable disposition of them would be to hire them out to contractors on public works. This would be of course engaged to some extent in competitive labor, but to the least extent, harmful to society. Some public works would be undertaken that would not otherwise be seriously thought of, and thus the employment of these convicts would be the means of doing work to other men. We might measure an enterprise of this kind, the building of a railroad along the river between this city and Parkersburg, a project that was quite earnestly agitated along the line of the route two years ago. Such a road could be built cheaply and inasmuch as it is not likely to be built otherwise, we do not see that the utilization of our convict labor in such a way would do any harm to society.

As a way in which very much of our convict labor might be utilized would be to disperse it among the different

BY TELEGRAPH.

TO THE DAILY INTELLIGENCER.

FOREIGN NEWS.

Spread of the Great Plague.

Inspection of American Cattle at Liverpool.

THE PLAGUE.

QUARANTINE ON LAND AND SEA.

ATHENS, February 9.—A decree has established a rigorous quarantine both on land and sea.

ST. PETERSBURG, February 9.—An official dispatch dated Astrakhan, Feb. 8th, reports that there are no cases of the plague at Wellanka. A doubtful case has appeared at Nizhnedneki, in the government of Saratoff, six thousand versts from Astrakhan. Several and fatal cases are reported at Silentree.

GEN. LOPEZ MEXICO ARRIVED AT DARTMOUTH, Feb. 9.—Troops for the sanitary cord on conveying stores, provisions, etc., are continually arriving at Dartmouth.

DUBLIN, February 8.—The government has given eight days' notice to St. Petersburg of the prohibition of certain imports from Russia or Bulgaria, and of sanitary supervision over persons crossing the frontier.

ST. PETERSBURG, February 8.—No advice of the plague at Astrakhan since the 6th inst. Cemeteries are being arranged for the dead.

SEVASTOPOL, February 8.—Dispatches from Russia state that attempts are made to arrest the ravages of the plague have thus far proved ineffectual. The sanitary cord drawn around the infected districts has been broken at several points, and among the results is the appearance of the plague at Wasykoye, a town near Moscow.

Accounts from the infected districts are very depressing, people dying like rotten sheep. Business is at a perfect standstill. The means for relieving the suffering are extremely limited and imperfect, and the suffering heart-rendering. Frightful sickness has broken out among the Russian troops at Adrianople, and there are reports that this also is the plague. Accounts from the infected districts are very depressing, people dying like rotten sheep. Business is at a perfect standstill. The means for relieving the suffering are extremely limited and imperfect, and the suffering heart-rendering. Frightful sickness has broken out among the Russian troops at Adrianople, and there are reports that this also is the plague.

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WASHINGTON.

DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS.

WASHINGTON, February 8.—The Democrats of Congress had an adjourned caucus this evening, and agreed to report a bill repealing the act of 1878, which was taken by the House. The bill will be in the form of an amendment, and attached to the sundry civil appropriation bill.

It was also decided to repeal clauses of the revised statutes which provide for the appointment of federal supervisors of elections.

Another caucus will be held Monday, when the proposed amendments will be perfected. Some members of the caucus say the Democrats will insist on the amendments being introduced in the bill, even at the risk of an extra session.

TILDEN IS THE MAN.

Tilden's friends here are much elated by what they consider his vindication as to the election of 1876. There is a strong undercurrent of feeling here in his favor among Democrats, as their standard-bearer in 1880. A Southern member of Congress remarked to-day that in the last two weeks he had received forty letters from his district, in each of which it was suggested that Samuel Tilden was the best man for the Democratic next year.

THE VOTE ON THE PENN. BILL.

Not a dollar can be paid out of the Treasury under the act of 1876, until money has been appropriated for the purpose. The Southern Democrats thereupon have an opportunity to show how thoroughly they have repented of their former position. An analysis of the following result:

Republican 100
Southern Democrats 100
Total 200

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